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No. 1301

# WHY BELIEVE IN FOREIGN MISSIONS?

BY MATTHEW D. MANN, A.M., M.D.

*"The light that shines farthest*
*Shines brightest nearest home."*

THE BOARD OF MISSIONS
281 FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y.

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# WHY BELIEVE IN FOREIGN MISSIONS?

*By Matthew D. Mann, A.M., M.D.*

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*"For the love of Christ constraineth us."*

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A LARGE number of people, many of them professing Christians, do not believe in foreign missions. One reason which they give for their opinion is that while there are so many unconverted heathen at home needing our attention we should not waste time, money and energy on those who are so far away, and who have so little claim on us. Those who hold this view have doubtless never considered that many of the heathen at home are so from choice; having heard the Gospel preached, they have rejected it; while the unbelievers in heathen lands are so from necessity, never having heard of God or of Jesus Christ.

What reasons are there for believing in foreign missions? In the first place, because our Lord, just before His ascension, gave us this command: "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. (St. Matt. xxix. 19, 20. Rev. Ver.)

**Our Lord's Command**

Make disciples—baptize—teach—all the nations! Where can we find a more positive and definite command? He also puts into the prayer which is called by His name, among the very first petitions: "Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, *on earth* as it is in heaven"—not alone in America, or Canada, or England, but "on earth," that is *everywhere*. If His will is to be done it must be known, and how can it be known unless it is told by those to whom it has been revealed? Every time we say the Lord's Prayer, we pray for the success of missions everywhere. Shall not our acts and beliefs be in accordance with our prayers? For the angel on the first Christmas morning declared, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all people,*" implying very clearly that those few who heard the good news should spread it. And what could be more imperative than the command, which covers both home and foreign missions, given in Acts i. 8: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

But you may ask, granting that foreign missions are right, why is such an effort being made to evangelize the world *now?* Why did not previous generations do it? The command was certainly given as much to them as to us.

**Why now?**

The answer is, simply because they could not—conditions were not favorable. Never until now in the history of the world has there been such an opportunity. The nations which heretofore have been absolutely closed, and which have rejected all attempts to convert them, have opened their doors and are now ready to hear. Africa, China, Korea, Japan, India, and even some Moslem countries are open as never before and the people willing to hear our message. It took many years to make the first Christian convert in China. Now there are more than 2,000,000. At the rate converts are being made, in thirty-five years there will be in China over 100,000,000 followers of Jesus Christ—a quarter of the population. (Dr. Pott.)

**Heathen nations open**

Twenty-five years ago there was not a Christian in Korea; now there are more than 200,000, and the number increasing at the rate of 30 per cent. each year.

Never have Christian nations been so prosperous, or had so much money to give as now. Never has it been so cheap and easy to travel, or have we ever had so many persons, men and women, ready to go if only they can be provided with the means.

**The world rich. Travel easy**

Again, we hear this question asked: Why disturb these people in the faith of their ancestors? Their religions are older than ours; let them alone; they will do well enough, and God in His mercy will accept those who do right according to their light.

This is a mistake. The heathen religions have not done well for the people, nor do they lead the people to do right. It is Christianity alone which has given us our civilization and placed us so much in advance. China has stood still for thousands of years, bound by the old systems, but is now losing faith in its religions. The contact with western civilizations, aided by the missionaries, has taught the people that they have missed something, and they are beginning to see that the fault has been largely with their religious and ethical systems. Many of them are throwing away their idols, abandoning the temples and seeking the true light.

**Heathen religions not enough**

Dr. Kato, one of Japan's foremost philosophers and students, says (*Literary Digest,* November 19th, 1910): "In recent times Buddhism has done nothing but go from bad to worse, and it is to-day in a pitiable condition. Speaking of the religion generally, we may say that it has descended to the level of a sale of prayers and ceremonies for such payment as people can be induced to make." The picture which the Japanese themselves draw is of dire need of a true religion. Their religions have no message for the ignorant, the old, the weary, the sick and the dying.

You will find abundant evidence, if you will read, that this is true not only in Japan but in China, and in other heathen countries. None of these religions give any adequate idea of God, especially of God as a loving Father. How could we expect them to? "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job xi. 7.) We get our clearest knowledge of God by direct revelation in the Bible. They have had no such revelation, and are largely atheists, except the Mohammedans. Hinduism has 330,000,000 gods. Buddhism deliberately denies the existence of God. Max Müller says: "Buddha denies the existence not only of the Creator, but of any absolute being." While the Indian Buddhists are atheists, the Buddhists of Japan worship Buddha himself.

**No idea of God**

The Chinese worship Confucius and their own ancestors and a multitude of idols. They are simply stumbling blindly, seeking the light and seeing it not, because it has not been kindled within the line of their vision.

Another great trouble is that none of these religions have any knowledge of a Saviour. There is but one Saviour, and they have never heard of Him. For "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.) Because there is no other, we read: "And in His name shall the Gentiles trust." (St. Matt. xii. 21.) "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" (Rom. x. 13, 14.) Without Jesus Christ and His love, all religions are utterly inadequate and nearly worthless.

**No knowledge of a Saviour**

**No true system of morality**

These heathen religions have no true system of morality. A great Japanese statesman declared that "he had come to realize that morality was absolutely indispensable to civilization, and that religion was absolutely indispensable to morality." There is only one religion which can furnish an adequate moral ideal, and that is the religion of Jesus Christ. Among the heathen nations lying, stealing, unchastity, murder, and many other of what we call crimes, are not only not forbidden but are even taught as sometimes proper. Mohammed says: "Verily, a lie is allowable in three cases—to a woman, to reconcile friends, and in war." The god Krishna himself, in one of the Hindu sacred books, declares that there are five different situations in which falsehood may be used—"in marriage, for the gratification of lust, to save life, to secure one's property, and for the sake of a Brahman." These five kinds of falsehood have been declared sinless. The Japanese religion has failed to perceive and enforce the inviolability of truth. "God cannot lie, and what God cannot do, no religion dare pronounce to be allowable to the sons of God."[1]

**Lying**

**Unchastity**

As to chastity Hinduism is particularly guilty. "Some of the most revered and popular writings of this religion are so full of obscenity and impure suggestion that to publish them in a Christian land in the English tongue would make the publisher liable to imprisonment. When, years ago, Lord Dalhousie, the viceroy of India, enacted a law punishing obscenity, the leaders of the Hindu religion were so exercised by it that the Government had to exempt religious writings of Hinduism and emblems of that faith from the action of the law.[2] The dancing girls of the temples, dedicated by their mothers in infancy, are in effect professional prostitutes. There are 12,000 of them in South India alone, corrupting the youth of the land, and yet they are a part of the religious system. Nor is India the only country sinning in this way.

**Murder**

As to murder, we all know how cheaply life is held in heathen lands. Mr. Roosevelt,[3] in speaking of the Mahdists (a sect of Mohammedans) in the Sudan, says: "Theirs was a cruelty of which we in our lives can form no realization. . . . All children were killed except as the Government took possession. . . . The figures will show this, that out of about 10,000,000 of people, 7,000,000 were killed during the years of the Mahdi uprising." Remember the wholesale murder of female children in China and in India. In none of these countries have they the Christian idea of the sacredness of human life.

**Whole race not included**

Heathen religions all cut off some portion of the race from benefits in their profession. Women and children in particular are generally not included as beneficiaries. Hindu, Mohammedan and Chinese women are never treated as equals by men. They are either kept for the gratification of man's lust, or in bondage as laborers for his service. The Hindu woman, for example—and the principle obtains in all heathen countries—is held in ignorance. Only six Hindu women in a thousand can read or write. In China only one woman in ten thousand can read. "The Hindu woman has never been esteemed worthy to know the sacred books of her own faith. Her mind is not a fit receptacle for such truths."[4] In

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1 "The Non-Christian Religion Inadequate," by R. E. Speer.
2 "Modern Hinduism," by the Rev. J. P. Jones.
3 *Literary Digest,* December 3d, 1910.
4 Jones, *loc. cit.*

India there are 26,000,000 widows, most of whom are kept in servitude, treated with hardship and contempt, and very many are the prey of lustful men. The representatives of Hinduism stand in the way of all helpful legislation for their relief. Not only are women debarred, but in India there are probably 50,000,000 pariahs (outcasts), men and women. They are not only socially ostracized, but are under the definite ban of the Hindu faith. They are not even permitted to enter its temples. "They are condemned by Hinduism to grovel eternally at the foot of the social, intellectual and moral ladder." Many of these pariahs are becoming Christians.

**No idea of the brotherhood of man**

They have no idea of the brotherhood of man or of man's responsibility for others. They know nothing of love as it is taught in our religion. A Chinaman or a Hindu will stand by and see another drown, starve or burn, without its ever occurring to him that it is his duty to try to save him. There is no rational or satisfactory provision for hospitals, orphanages or other charitable institutions in these lands. In China recently, during a famine, a rich Chinaman made a corner in rice to get still richer out of the calamities of his fellow-countrymen. A woman in the pangs of childbirth was recently, at night, put off a canal boat near St. John's College, Shanghai, because she might die, and that would bring bad luck to the others on the boat. A man was allowed to drown because two dollars was not immediately forthcoming to pay in advance for the services of a possible rescuer.

**Suffering from ignorance**

The absence of a knowledge of modern science, particularly of medicine and sanitation, causes frightful suffering and needless mortality in all heathen lands. Witchcraft and superstition take the place of legitimate medicine. The greatest benefits conferred by missionaries are those of the medical men and women. Not only do they help the sick and afflicted, but in so doing they gain the confidence of the people and open the way for evangelistic work.

**Duty as a nation**

As a nation we owe to other less fortunate nations a knowledge of what has made us civilized. We are ourselves the product of foreign missions. Our forefathers were uneducated barbarians until the Christian missionaries converted and civilized them. "If Christian life is in us, having come to us through those generous souls that have brought it down to us, we are in honor bound to prove our birthright by passing it on to those who have it not."

**Commercial benefits of missionary work**

Putting it on a much lower plane, we should not forget that missionaries have done much good in a material way.[1] Africa, Korea, Manchuria, China, Burma, Siam and Arabia, nearly the whole of Asia and Africa have been opened up by the work of the missionaries. Not only have they opened up the countries, but by securing the confidence of the natives they have often paved the way for trade, advantageous alike to East and West.

**Necessity for self-protection**

It is, again, as a measure of self-protection, that we should seek to Christianize foreign nations. "In all history there has not been a period when such vast multitudes of people were in the midst of such stupendous changes, economic, social, educational and religious."[2] There has been a wonderful awakening both in Asia and Africa. The Near East and the Far East are both rousing from a long sleep.

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1 "The World's Debt to the Missionary," by R. E. Speer.

2 "The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions," by J. R. Mott, p. 3.

They are looking toward the West, and are eagerly adopting our knowledge and our methods, in a word, our civilization. Whether this civilization shall be Christian, whether they shall adopt our religion with our civilization, is of the utmost importance, not only to them but to us as well. China with its countless millions, civilized and supplied with all the power which modern civilization gives, but without the guiding spirit of Christianity, without a conscience, will be a distinct threat to the rest of the world. Dr. Pott, of St. John's College, Shanghai, said, before the Laymen's Missionary Congress at Chicago: "The real 'yellow peril' is that China may be a godless giant, and that the awakening of the Far East may mean the birth of a new civilization—a civilization materialistic in spirit, one that will not make for the progress of the Kingdom of God; but will be opposed to the spiritual development of the race." We shall then "be face to face with what will be a menace to the best interests of humanity."

The Pandita Ramabai says of India: "The majority of the higher classes are getting Western secular education, which is undermining their faith in their ancestral religion. They are not getting anything better to take the place of the old religion in their hearts, and are therefore without God, without hope, without Christ, going down socially and morally, and becoming very irreligious."

This is true, though in a less degree, of Turkey, Persia, Egypt and other Oriental lands. There is little time to lose; we must push this matter now, while the seething mass is in a plastic state. Later it will be too late, and both we and they may suffer as a consequence.

**Reflex effect on Church at home**

Not only does work for missions help others, but through it we get in return a distinct gain. The cases are numerous where church congregations in our own land, which were dead or dying, have been brought to life by taking up missionary work. Canon Liddon says, "Churches are generally living churches in the exact ratio of their missionary activity."

**Missionaries should be supported for what they have done**

The individual is also quickened in his religious life—as has proved to be the case over and over again—by an active interest in missions. "The deepening of the personal consecration to our Blessed Lord on the part of those who are helping the missionary work is the most blessed result of doing it."

We should believe in missionaries because they have already done a vast deal for heathen lands, and they should be supported and encouraged on that account. Even in Africa, which at first seemed an almost hopeless field, owing to the low condition of the natives, an immense deal has been accomplished. In Uganda the missions of the English Church have perhaps the largest congregation worshipping under one roof in the world. Mr. Roosevelt, after seeing what has been done, says, "I do wish that the well-meaning people who laugh at or decry missionary work could realize what the missionaries have done right there in middle Africa."

The Hon. Mr. T. V. Seshagiri Aiyet, a Hindu, offers this testimony: "The work of the foreign missions is waking up the educated classes of India. It has made them realize that they would be losing ground if they neglect to raise the depressed classes."[1] Similar testimony of the strongest kind comes from Japan and Korea. The wonderful awakening in China is largely due to missionary effort. "Taking the world as a whole, victory is assured if the present campaign be adequately supported and pressed." (Mott.)

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1 *Literary Digest, loc. cit.*

Sixth Edition, October, 1914. (10M.—29M.) S.P.

Most important of all in this connection is the conclusive proof that God's Holy Spirit is working with the missionaries. Numerous instances might be cited where the most depraved and debased heathen have been converted by reading or hearing the Gospel. (See Mott's book, "The Decisive Hour.")

**The work of the Holy Spirit**

Where so much has already been accomplished, can we afford to neglect the workers in the field? It is certainly our duty to hold up their hands and give them adequate support.

Christian unity[1], which some of us so eagerly long for, is certainly promoted by missionary work. Nothing has been more strikingly proved by the Laymen's Missionary Movement. At a meeting of missionaries at the Centenary Conference in Shanghai, those assembled, representing almost every Protestant communion, spoke in the strongest terms. They declared that they acknowledged that the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed substantially express the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith; further, they said, "We gladly recognize ourselves as already one body in Christ, teaching one way of eternal life, and calling men into one holy fellowship"—and more in the same strain.

**Christian Unity promoted**

As Churchmen we have certain things to teach which the other Christian bodies in part omit. We have a system inherited from the earliest times, which we believe is according to the teaching of Christ. We can intelligently bring to the people of heathen lands a true knowledge of the sacraments of the Church, which we believe are the best, and a necessary means, of spiritual development. It is quite likely that in time there will be a great Church of China, a great Church of Japan and a great Church of India, including all the Christians in those countries. Surely we do not want to see these national churches so organized that we cannot recognize them as parts of the Holy Catholic Church. Unless we make our influence strongly felt in these lands, this unfortunate event is likely to occur. It is our duty then, as Churchmen, to use every endeavor to prevent what we believe would be a great calamity, by presenting our views strongly and by gaining as many adherents as we can, so as to bring as much influence as possible to bear in the organization of these national churches.

**Duty as Churchmen**

Lastly, the rapid evangelizing of the world will hasten the second coming of our Lord. Has He not Himself declared:[2] "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come." (St. Matt. xxiv. 14.)

**The second coming**

From what is here written, it seems very clear that the duty of working for the spread of His Gospel is one which devolves upon every follower of Jesus Christ. We may well ask, How can a man call himself a Christian and not believe in missions? The preaching of the Gospel is the greatest duty of the Church, and therefore of each of its members.

Of late there has grown up a wonderful literature on missions. Let him who still doubts read, and he will surely be convinced, that as Christians and as Churchmen we must use every effort; give, give, and give again; pray without ceasing and work unremittingly, that our Lord's command may be obeyed, and the Gospel preached to every creature—not sometime, but *now*.

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1 See "Foreign Missions and Christian Unity," by R. E. Speer.

2 Most commentators agree that this verse refers to the second coming of our Lord, and not to the destruction of Jerusalem.